

# THE POST

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SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF THE DALLAS AND LAKE-LEHMAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

## Surfing can be fun, educational



PHOTOS FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Kindergarten students Olivia Shenefield and Christopher Dautrich, along with their teacher Victoria Flynn, have fun finding a picture themselves posted on Dallas School District's Web site.

By GENELLE HOBAN  
Post Correspondent

BACK MOUNTAIN - Digital cameras, iPods and TiVos are just a few new technological gadgets and gizmos that promise to make things in life faster and easier.

You can add the up-to-date Dallas and Lake-Lehman school district Web sites to the list.

It was only about a year ago that the school Web sites would go for weeks at a time without new information, but now they receive updates mostly every day thanks to the time and effort of some hi-tech gurus on staff.

Brian Murphy, the director of technology in the Lake-Lehman School District, gave the school's Web site its first makeover roughly a year ago.

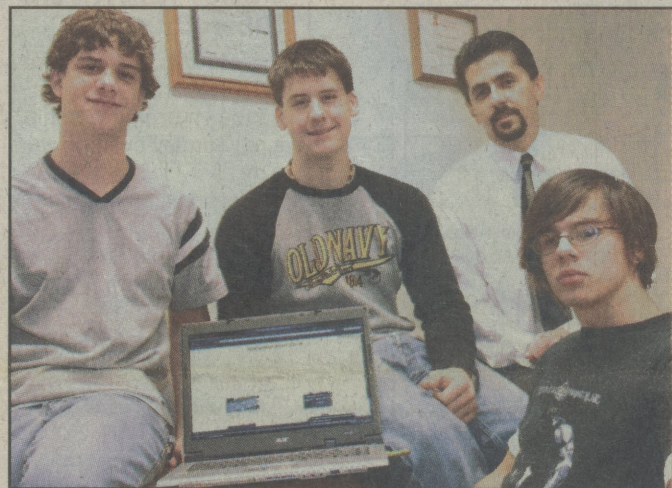
"Our biggest reason was to keep an open line of communication with the faculty, the parents and the public," Murphy, a graduate of the district, said. "I know at the beginning of the school year we were getting between 200 and 300 hits a day, but I haven't checked lately."

Online seekers can find everything from minutes from the school board meetings to sporting events schedules to breakfast and lunch menus on the Lake-Lehman site.

"We've had great feedback on it," Murphy said. "We are going to give it another facelift at the end of January. It's going to be more user-friendly. It will have more menus and easier navigation for each building."

The Dallas School District also revamped its site in summer 2005 by using the Teacher Web program. Every teacher in the district is now required to have his or her own Web site.

"We are slowly making teachers aware that the Web site is a feature of the district," said Laura Matechak, educational technologist for the district. "We've gotten very positive feedback from it, especially from parents that are working."



Lake-Lehman High School students Steve Heindel, Jeff Franklin, Matt Poremba - along with technology adviser Brian Murphy - are in the process of redesigning the school's home Web page as part of their senior project.

### USEFUL TO YOU

The Dallas School District Web site is located at [www.dallassd.com](http://www.dallassd.com). You may visit the Lake-Lehman site at [www.lake-lehman.k12.tx.us](http://www.lake-lehman.k12.tx.us).

The Dallas School District does not yet have its grading system online, but has considered making it a feature of the school's site.

"We are headed in the direction to check into how to get grades online, but we are still in the research stage," Matechak said.

The Lake-Lehman district's hope for its Web site is to keep parents well informed and to get rid of the gossip wagon.

"In today's day and age, schools can function better with a Web page," Murphy said. "It allows everyone to stay up to date with all of the happenings."

Matechak said that even though the district is the Web site as an added informational tool, it hasn't stopped distributing paper information as well.

"It's good in case a paper doesn't make it home or a student loses it," she said. "Also, if something changes say due to in climate weather we can just post the changes online instead of sending our another paper because they will know it's canceled from the TV or radio."

The Dallas site has also shown to be useful for out-of-towners who are thinking of moving to the district, as well as for substitute teachers or sporting event goers because there are directions to all of the fields posted on the Web site, Matechak said.

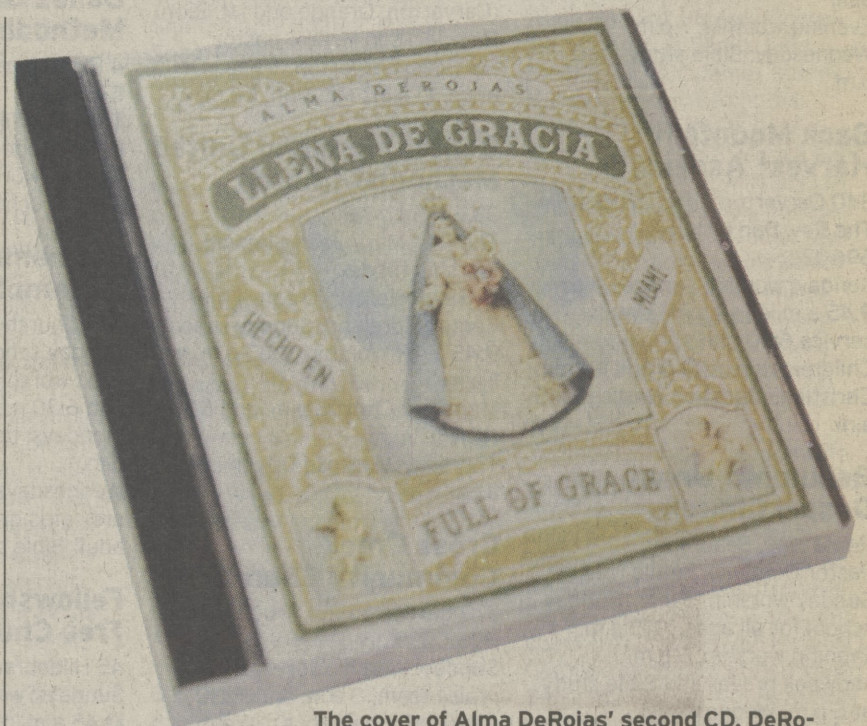
The site allows them to look at their child's homework assignments and have an idea of what their evening is going to entail."

The Dallas site also includes information about the School Board, including the minutes from recent meetings. It also has information about many programs in the district, enrollment information and athletic schedules.

The homework hot line is defunct, but Dallas replaced it with the online homework Web page. The Lake-Lehman site also lists homework assignments.

Parents of students in grades seven through 12 at Lake-Lehman can even check the grades of their children online by using LetterGrade, a program that allows parents to log in and see the progress their child is making.

"Each parent has a separate login so that only they can see their child's grades," Murphy, a resident of Tunkhannock, said. "The grades are usually updated every two weeks."



The cover of Alma DeRojas' second CD. DeRojas is a native of Dallas.

## DeRojas honors heritage

By GENELLE HOBAN  
Post Correspondent



Alma DeRojas

Dallas native Alma DeRojas recently recorded her second CD, "Full of Grace/Llena de Gracia." The 1998 graduate of Bishop O'Reilly High School, who resides in Miami, recorded the album in honor of the Catholic patroness of Cuba.

The daughter of Dr. Juan and Alma DeRojas of Dallas didn't take a keen interest in her Cuban heritage until her high school and college years, when she learned to speak Spanish.

"We never spoke Spanish in the house when I was growing up," she said. "My grandparents speak it only to each other."

DeRojas said her grandfather attended the same Jesuit high school as Fidel Castro, the president of Cuba. Her grandparents, however, left Cuba in 1961 after the Bay of Pigs invasion and now reside in Mountain Top.

"I started singing in church," she said. "I sing at a church in Miami. I got the idea to record a CD and promote it myself at churches in Miami."

Her mother, Alma DeRojas, thinks her daughter inherited some of her musical talent from her grandmother, Alma Murphy, who used to sing and play the piano.

"The pianist I work with is excellent, and we sing together every week in church so we worked well together," DeRojas, 25, said.

"I've been singing in the church for 10 years. The music just comes naturally to me. Recording the CD was one of the best experiences of my life."

The CD is full of such classic church hymns as "Ave Maria" but also contains some Hispanic songs, such as "Gracias Senor" ("Thank You Sir"), which DeRojas said is her favorite song to sing, especially at weddings.

DeRojas said she's tried to write her own songs in the past but is definitely not a composer.

While pursuing her bachelor's degree in Spanish and English at Susquehanna University, she took her first

trip 90 miles off the coast of Florida to Cuba in 1999 to attend classes at the University of Havana.

"The trip changed my whole life," she said. "Almost everything I've done since then has dealt with Cuba. Cubans love Americans."

When they would find out I was from America they had a thousand questions for me."

DeRojas said the city of Havana was extremely deteriorated and everyone who lived there was equally poor.

"The people in Cuba get so much food from the government a month, but it's never enough," she said. "They rely on relatives in the states to send them money."

While pursuing her master's degree in Latin American and Caribbean studies at Florida International University in Miami, DeRojas returned to the island again to conduct research on the Catholic Church of Cuba.

The songs on her latest CD, released just a few weeks ago, are about Mary, or Maria, as Cubans call her.

"I dedicated it to the Virgin of Charity, the patroness of Cuba," she said.

"She is very popular among Cubans in Miami."

Her first CD, titled "I Lift My Soul/ Levanto mi Alma," was recorded in September 2004. It is a bilingual collection of classical and contemporary Catholic music that DeRojas recorded in less than two days.

Half of the money she earned from selling copies of her first CD was given to "Caritas," a social-services agency run by the Catholic Church in Cuba.

Her music has been played on the Catholic Music Network and is played regularly on "The Message in Music," a weekly program on EWTN Global Catholic Radio.

Aside from her musical career, DeRojas is employed as the coordinator of Florida International University's Cuban Research Institute.

In the future DeRojas hopes to publish the essays she wrote after gathering information during her three trips to Cuba.

"It's roughly 300 pages about my trips to the island interweaved with the stories that my grandparents told me about their life in Cuba," she said.

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## Home of a prominent Back Mountain resident damaged in fire

The home of a prominent Back Mountain resident was damaged by a fire earlier this week. The house at 412 Orchard West in Newberry Estate - owned by civic leader, fund-raiser and former Wyoming Seminary Preparatory School president Wallace Stettler - received heat, smoke and water damage.

No one was home at the time of the fire, which took place Monday night. A woman representing Stettler said he was out of town at the time when the fire broke out and was returning to the area Thursday.

The 85-year-old has served on the boards of numerous organizations, including the Back Mountain Memorial Library and has raised millions of dollars for a wide variety of organizations. His wife of 53 years, Sue, passed away in 1998.

More than two dozen firefighters from six Back Mountain fire companies responded to the fire, which was noticed by a security officer at Newberry Estate who saw smoke coming out of a window. It is believed the fire began in the basement and the cause was "accidental electrical," according to Dallas Fire Chief Harry Vivian.

The fire chief was very proud of the work done by the firefighters to prevent the fire from spreading to the other three condominiums in the unit.

"Those are very difficult fires to fight," Vivian said. "With multi-residence constructions, there's always the risk of the fire spreading to the other units. The firefighters did a fantastic job by keeping the fire limited to only one unit. It was a great save."

No firefighters were injured while battling the blaze, said Vivian.



The home of Wallace Stettler was damaged in a fire earlier this week at Newberry Estate.

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